

Professor Baird has forwarded us a catalogue of North American birds, printed on thin paper in clear type, and useful for labelling specimens or marking off desiderata. We believe it is issued by the Smithsonian Institution, for the use of their numerous collectors.

XXXII.—*Letters, Extracts from Correspondence, Announcements, &c.*

It is with sincere regret that, although only arrived at our third Number, we have already to record the loss of one of our contributors. Mr. Edward Evans, the joint author with Mr. Wilson Sturge of the paper "On the Birds of Western Spitzbergen," printed in our last Number, died at Neath on the 13th of April, after a few days' illness, at the early age of twenty-six years. The deceased gentleman was a member of the Society of Friends, and, although so young, was conspicuous for his activity in the furtherance of philanthropical objects. As ornithologists, we must respect his memory, as that of a keen lover of our study, and the traveller who brought to the knowledge of naturalists a new and very interesting bird, the *Lagopus hemileucurus*.

We have received the following letters:—

To the Editor of The Ibis.

SIR,—I trouble you with a few remarks upon the Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia provincialis*, Temm.), a bird not uncommon on the south coast, and near Brighton, particularly in the autumn. Mr. Swaysland, Naturalist, 4 Queen's Road, Brighton, killed five on the 30th of November, 1858, which I saw in the meat; two of these were cocks and two hens; the other I do not remember. At that period of the year you can get a good view of them, and again in the spring; in general they are too shy, keeping low in furze. If there is a whitethorn bush in the latter they always fly to it, and sitting on the top, cry *pur, pur, pur*, swelling out the feathers of the throat. The hen in autumn plumage appears lighter and smaller than the cock. These little birds care not for snow, as under the thick furze they are warm and comfortable. Mr. Tristram, who has lately done so much for the science of ornithology, mentions in his "Catalogue

of Eggs," in 1857, that in Algeria they are "entirely confined to the dry highlands, far away from the habitations of man ;" near Brighton, however, they may be shot within a mile or less of the houses ;—this I take to be exceptional. The spring plumage of *Sylvia provincialis* is much darker than the autumn ; the bird appears almost a different species. On the 6th of April, 1859, I saw a cock lately killed : the beak of this specimen was quite denuded of feathers on the under mandible, in the manner of the Rook, to which it bore a strong resemblance. Mr. Swaysland and I compared the beak with that of one killed the previous autumn : this was well clothed, and we could only explain the circumstance by supposing the bird to dig in the ground as does the Rook ; during frost the earth would be soft at the roots of the furze. I am told that this appearance of the under mandible is common to specimens killed in spring. Probably some of your readers may be able to confirm the circumstance I have mentioned, which I do not find recorded by any ornithological writer.

I may here call your attention to the fact of two specimens of the Short-toed Lark (*Alauda brachydactyla*) having been obtained near Brighton. I saw one alive on September 26th, 1854, which had been caught by boys on the Downs, and kept in confinement some time, not being distinguished from the Skylark. This bird cracked seeds like a Canary, instead of swallowing them whole ; it was very tame, and ultimately killed and stuffed. The second specimen was killed in April 1858, by a person on the sea-shore, who saw it come to land, and light, after a short rest, upon the road, where it immediately began dusting itself. I did not see this bird, but my informant was the person who killed it, and one who is quite trustworthy : it was afterwards preserved.

Yours, &c.,

GEORGE DAWSON ROWLEY.

5 Peel Terrace, Brighton,
8th April, 1859.

To the Editor of The Ibis.

SIR,—I obtained on the 1st of this month a nest and eggs of

what I believe to be the Ash-coloured Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*). I was staying at Hayling Island, on the coast of Hampshire, at the time, and was out naturalizing, when I saw the nest taken out of a large, thick, scrubby hedgerow, consisting principally of brambles and blackthorn. It was found by some boys belonging to the Coast-guard Station; and they described the old birds, one of which was on the nest at the time, as like very large Wheatears. One of the boys had seen the birds near the same place about ten days before, and had found the nest, which he was obliged to pull down in order to see if there were any eggs in it; it was, however, not quite finished, and he believed this to be the second nest of the same birds. I mentioned the above circumstances to Mr. Hardy, the Rector of the island, who is a thorough naturalist, and he confirmed me in my belief by telling me that for several years he had observed a pair of Ash-coloured Shrikes in his grounds, that they frequented some railings in front of his window, and that he took great interest in their habits, and had twice obtained their nests and eggs. The railings had been removed a year or two ago, and he had not seen them since. He also told me that he thought there were generally two pairs of these birds in the island, and mentioned the exact haunts of the others. He is well acquainted with the Red-backed Shrike, which is not rare there, and said he was not likely to confound them together.

On getting home I compared the eggs which I had from the boys with the Shrikes' eggs in my cabinet, and they are decidedly larger than any of those of the Red-backed which I possess. I had my glass with me when I met the boys, and tried hard to detect the birds, but without success; and as I soon afterwards had to leave the island, I was prevented from going to the second locality. If I am able, however, I shall hope another year to obtain some further facts on this subject.

Yours, &c.,

WILLIAM HENRY HAWKER.

Green Hook, Horndean, Hants,

June 16th, 1859.

Mr. Wallace's last letters (dated "Batchian, Jan. 28th, 1859") announce that he has heard of a second and finer species of Paradise-bird in that island. Also that he has sent off specimens of the newly-discovered *Semioptera wallacii* * by the Overland Mail to Mr. Stevens, so that they may be very shortly expected in this country†.

Mr. Fraser's collections are still detained in Ecuador by the blockade of Guayaquil. His last letters (dated "Trugincho above Puellaro, April 18th") say,—

"Guayaquil is, and has been strictly blockaded for now eight months by the Peruvian fleet, the mail alone being allowed to pass; and it is said that the population is suffering from the scarcity and high price of provisions.

"On the 22nd of March we had two shocks of an earthquake; it occurred about 8.30 A.M. I received it in Calacali; it was quite momentary, and being in my *quartero* at the time, I can only say it was indescribable (I had experienced two in Malta in 1846 or 1847, and was much of the same opinion then),—a noise, sensation, and confusion; the one followed the other so quickly that there was not any time for reflection until all was over, and the mischief done. On going into the *patio* or yard to see what was the matter, I found the adjoining quarter or room thrown down, and the rest of the building so cracked and shaken as to be in a ruinous state, except my solitary quarter, which alone escaped with very slight damage. The church-door was thrown down, but I did not see or hear of further mischief in that *pueblo*. San Antonio, which I passed through the same day, had both churches thrown down, but I did not hear of further damage.

"The air, *en camino*, was filled with clouds of fine dust from the slips on the mountain sides.

"Descending the mountain to the river, below Perucho, the earth had slipped over the road in three places, and we had to

* See *antea*, p. 210, and P. Z. S. 1859, p. 129.

† Since writing the above, these birds have arrived. We hope to give full particulars about them in our next Number.

make the beasts scramble over the loose mounds to continue our way. The mountain here was cracked in every direction, and it was as much as spurs could do to make the terrified animals progress.

“In Quito the tall massive church towers have in many instances, together with some thirty or forty houses, been thrown down, and the buildings more or less damaged. Scarcely a house or a room has escaped without cracks; some fronts of houses lay in heaps in the streets: twelve persons were killed.

“Tacunga, Ambato, and Riobamba have escaped entirely, but Guano and the provinces have suffered severely. In Guayaquil some thirty houses have been thrown down.

“The general belief is that Pichincha has been the cause of all, but I imagine it to have been the cure, for it appears that the nearer Quito the slighter the shocks; and this opinion is partly confirmed by the following extract from Professor Jame-son’s letter:—‘The people here (Quito) believe that the volcano of Pichincha has been the cause of the catastrophe,—an opinion in which I cannot concur, otherwise the effect would have been more local. In fact, the city, considering the height of the public buildings, has suffered comparatively little damage, whilst some villages in the neighbouring province, such as Cotacachi and Aluntagui, are in a heap of ruins.’ The shock in Guayaquil must have also been extremely severe. In Perucho it was described as flowing from east to west. But C. R. Buckalew, Esq., the United States Minister, who was in his *patio* at the moment, says he distinctly saw the wave pass along the ridge of the roof of his house, which lies north and south, and cross that portion which is east and west, and that the whole city below was for the moment in motion like a wave of the sea, followed by a cloud of dust from the tumbled building materials.”

Mr. Osbert Salvin, one of the most active contributors to ‘The Ibis,’ left England on the 17th of May last, by the W. I. M. Steamer ‘Atrato,’ on his return to Guatemala, where, being about to become a resident, he will neglect no opportunity of investigating the natural products of this little-known

country. Mr. Salvin's letter, dated May 28th, on his passage out, says—"Some Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) came on board when we were 180 miles N.W. of the Azores; so it is probable that the bird is found in those islands. On Sunday last, May 22nd, we passed close to Graciosa, and saw Terceira, Pico, St. George, and Fayal. Almost every inch of Graciosa seems to be cultivated, and the hill-sides are all fenced out into fields. I have not seen a single Tropic-bird (*Phaëthon*). We expect to make Sombbrero before noon tomorrow, and to reach St. Thomas by six o'clock in the evening; if so, we shall have made the passage in 12 days 7 hours."

Professor Baird, of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., gives us a most promising account of what is now doing in North America in the way of Natural History. He says—"Much as has been done in previous years in the way of Natural History exploration in North America, the present year is likely to witness more than ever. A large number of parties are out in the field, and in most cases accompanied by much better taxidermists than the previous ones. We have had vast collections of birds brought in heretofore, but they have been made by amateurs and beginners, not professional operators, and very few have been fit to give away or to mount. All this will, I hope, be improved this season.

"A most important expedition is that of Mr. Kennicott to the Hudson's Bay region. He is now on Lake Winnipeg, *en route* either for Fort York or Fort Simpson. He will remain two years or more in the country, and will make a clean sweep. His special object is the eggs; but he will collect birds too. He has met with the heartiest cooperation from Sir George Simpson, who has ordered all possible facilities to be given him.

"Next, in the main Rocky Mountains are no less than four well-equipped parties of Government explorers, on different parallels between our northern and southern boundary; several of them have regular taxidermists with them. There is an excellent collector at Fort Crook, near Mount Shasta, in Northern California, who has already gathered some 500 specimens, to come in by next steamer.

"The most important operation, however, is that at Cape St. Lucas, at the end of the Gulf of California, in charge of Mr. Xantus (de Vesey). He collected 2000 birds at Fort Tejon in some fifteen months, under great disadvantages. He now has almost his whole time to devote to Natural History, and a regular assistant besides. If nothing untoward occurs, he will exhaust the Western part of Mexico in the two years of his residence.

"We are devoting particular attention to completing our collection of North American eggs, and have issued widely a circular already sent you. It already promises good results.

"We have had a few birds from Piura in Peru, and fifty species from the line of the Panama railroad. I am going to arrange all our South American birds in one series. We have a dozen or two of Trinidad birds in alcohol, and are promised a series of Bahaman specimens by a gentleman just returned thence."

Professor Baird also mentions, that the 'Sacred Vulture*' of Bartram, a bird quite unknown since its alleged discovery in the last century, is said to have been met with again in Florida; and in relation to the same bird we have seen two letters from Mr. Alexander S. Taylor, of Monterey, California, reprinted from the 'San Francisco Herald.' Neither of these communications, however, contain anything very positive on the subject; and the statement of the "intelligent Sonoranian" that "the bird has four wings" renders us unwilling to place much confidence in the rest of his details on this subject.

The new pair of Bennett's Cassowary (*Casuarus bennettii*), announced in our last Number as likely to be added to the collection at the Zoological Gardens, arrived in good condition a few weeks ago, so that the Society now possesses three living examples of this remarkable bird. Dr. Bennett, of Sydney, the liberal donor of these animals, is himself now on a visit to this

* *Vide* Cassin, B. of Cal., Oregon, &c. p. 57.

country, and has brought with him, amongst other interesting objects of natural history, several eggs of this Cassowary in a more perfect state than the examples hitherto received. The Zoological Society have also further increased their collection of *Struthiones*, by obtaining a young pair of Ostriches from the Cape of Good Hope. When these have a little further progressed towards maturity, we shall have a fine opportunity of comparing the Northern and Southern birds together. The Society have also recently received examples of several other interesting birds—the White-winged Trumpeter (*Psophia leucoptera*), the Cardinal Eclectus (*Eclectus cardinalis*), the Australian Thick-knee (*Ædicnemus australis*), and two fine pairs of the European Waxwing (*Ampelis garrula*).